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Contents

Editorial

4

The Revd Dr Keith G Jones

Literature as Midrash

5 – 20

A Fresh Look at Genesis 4:7 in the Light of John Steinbeck,
East of Eden

The Revd Alec Gilmore

Reading Genesis with the Church Fathers:
Metaphors of creation in John Chrysostom's
Homilies on Genesis

21 – 33

The Revd Rosa Hunt

Historiography of Baptists in Russia

34 – 43

Dr Albert W Wardin Jr

Book Reviews

44 – 48

Editorial

This current issue of the Journal deals with two areas of baptistic life which are important to us at IBTS and to the gathering, convictional communities we seek to serve. The first is the importance of the Bible within the community. Two articles explore aspects of the first book of the First Testament, Genesis, from both a contemporary and an historical angle. The final article has the task of mapping Baptist history.

Alec Gilmore, one of our Senior Research Fellows, has a long track record in exploring theatre and literature and its interaction with the biblical text. He works from the premise that life and experience can help us to understand the Bible. Building on the ideas of Helen Leneman of how music and opera can be used as tools for interpreting scripture, Alec Gilmore asks if literature might be used in the same way. We have a fascinating contribution from him on the works of the American author John Steinbeck, focusing on his novel *East of Eden*, which Steinbeck intended to be a family history for his two sons, but ended up as an account of life in the Salinas Valley, California, where he grew up. The starting point for the exploration is Genesis 4, with a particular reference to the word *timshol* in verse 7. Steinbeck uses the account of Cain and Abel as a point of interaction to lead us into a treatise on the nature and price of the human predicament.

Then our research student Rosa Hunt reflects on how golden-mouthed John Chrysostom preached on Genesis in Constantinople, where he was consecrated bishop in 397 AD. She explores the three major metaphors Chrysostom uses reflecting on the creation accounts – as a work of art, as an example or teacher and as an act of love.

Finally, our esteemed colleague, historian Albert Wardin, brings us up to date with a review of the historiography of Baptists in Russia, which is both a resource and for many, a vital tool in working on the story of this important part of the European Baptist community.

The Revd Dr Keith G Jones
Rector, IBTS

Literature as Midrash

A Fresh Look at Genesis 4:7 in the Light of John Steinbeck, *East of Eden*

Alec Gilmore

I begin with the assumption that the purpose of preaching is **not only** to expound the Bible to help us to understand life **but also** to explore life and experience to help us to understand the Bible, and that takes me first to Helen Leneman, an independent American scholar in Jewish Studies, now based in Rome. Helen is also a cantor, professional singer and pianist, who writes and lectures in Europe and the US on music, and has explored the possibility of using music and opera as an additional tool for interpreting scripture.¹ In this paper I want to add literature to opera and to explore John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* as a way into Genesis 4 (the story of Cain and Abel) with particular reference to verse 7:

Sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but *timshol*, (variously translated) you can master it.

A Fresh Look at Cain and Abel

Biblical scholars and traditional commentaries have very little to offer on Cain and Abel² and most of it treads a well-worn path. Comments³ revolve round issues such as why the younger is mentioned before the older,⁴ why one person's sacrifice is accepted and another's rejected,⁵ why agriculture is 'in' but hunting is 'out'⁶ and why some people seem to be inherently good and others inherently evil.⁷

¹ See particularly Helen Leneman, *The Performed Bible. The Story of Ruth in Opera and Oratorio* (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2007).

² One exception to this is Larry J Kreitzer, *The Old Testament in Fiction and Film* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), in which he devotes a whole chapter (pp. 94-125) to J Steinbeck's *East of Eden*, including the various ways in which recent translations interpret *timshol*. 'Thou shalt rule over him' (AV), 'You will be mastered by it' (NEB), 'You ought to master it' (Moffatt), 'You must master it' (NASB, NRSV, NIV), 'Which you must master' (JB), 'You can be his master' (GNB), 'Thou canst have thy way with him' (Knox).

³ For a summary of interpretations over 2000 years see David M Gunn & Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: OUP, 1993), pp. 12-33.

⁴ Philo (a learned Jew in Alexandria and much influenced by Greek philosophy, c 20-50 CE) suggests it may be because vice is older than virtue but virtue is prior in value.

⁵ Philo suggests it is because Cain delays ('after many days') and because his offering is 'some of the fruits' (not the 'first-fruits'). A Targum from around the 7th century but possibly reflecting earlier interpretations (Pseudo-Jonathan) says it is a question of whether Cain is satisfied that he has worked well and a test of how he reacts under pressure.

⁶ A E Speiser (*Genesis*, Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), quoted in Gunn & Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 21-2), a representative of the predominant view in historical criticism

Norman Whybray⁸ dismisses most such explanations as purely speculative with nothing in the text to support them; *timshol* and the mark of Cain he avoids altogether. All he can offer in exchange is that it is the symbolic beginning of evil, the first case of violence by one human being against another, and a precursor of Genesis 6: 5 and 11 that mankind is wholly corrupt.

Von Rad,⁹ more positively, notes that it is not Cain but his sacrifice that is rejected and there is still hope for him; evil is an objective force to which human beings are vulnerable but coping with its consequences is still within our control (vv 6-7) and Cain has to take responsibility for what he does and any guilt that goes with it.¹⁰

So, in this hermeneutical desert, let's start somewhere else. John Steinbeck (1902-68) distinguished himself as an American writer with novels such as *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Of Mice and Men* and *In Dubious Battle*, and at the age of 50 embarked on his *magnum opus*, *East of Eden*, intended as a family history for his two sons, but ending up as a biography of the Salinas Valley in California where he grew up.

Compared to biblical commentaries on Genesis 4, it is a breath of fresh air, cool and refreshing water in a thirsty land. As we unpack it, see if you can identify with his experience. At the end, reflect on whether your experience chimes in with his, whether his conclusion meets your need, and whether it can be sustained on the strength of the Genesis 4 anecdote.

Scene One: The Salinas Valley

East of Eden begins with a description of the Salinas Valley which lies between the Gabilan Mountains to the east (the harbinger of light) and the Santa Lucias to the west (dark and foreboding). Steinbeck's father drilled this Valley to find levels of top soil, gravel, sand, black earth and imperishable wood. Steinbeck plumbs the depths of the same Valley to discover the meaning of life and what it is to be a human being. The journey takes him back in time, all the way to the story of Cain and Abel, in the course of which he uses his experience to explore the tensions between

for most of the 20th century, sees it as a conflict between the pastoral and the agricultural ways of life, possibly a later reflection of tension between nomads and settlers.

⁷ C Westerman (*Genesis 1-11, A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984, German origin 1974), quoted in Gunn & Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 22-4) takes a more personal view with Cain as the prototype of the murderer.

⁸ 'Genesis' in John Barton & John Muddiman (eds.), *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), pp. 44-45.

⁹ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis. A Commentary* (tr. John H Marks) (London: SCM Press, 1961), pp. 101-2.

¹⁰ John H Marks, 'The Book of Genesis' in Charles M Laymon (ed.), *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 6.

the two halves of the Valley, the light and the dark, the hope of the one and the despair of the other, with human beings caught in the crossfire, struggling with the tension between the two, and he finishes up with the origins of good and evil and a fresh interpretation of the Hebrew word *timshol*, as meaning the capacity to choose and to take control of our lives.

How he got there we have no idea, but his biography, correspondence and output help us to identify one or two stepping stones, in the course of which we may find that *his* story, the Bible story, and our story are not all that far apart.

Stepping Stone One — Life in the Valley

We begin with the people in the Valley. On the light side we have the **Hamiltons**. Steinbeck was a Hamilton. Middle class American. Traditional, courteous and genteel Episcopalian parents. The epitome of the American Dream. Stanford material to his little finger — not really, but superficially. On the dark side were the **Trasks**. Unlike the Hamiltons, who were a real family, the Trasks were Steinbeck's creation for the purpose of the novel, but they were no less real. You could find the Trasks anywhere and everywhere in the Valley but they always belonged to 'the other side' and life for them was dark.

Steinbeck came from one side and fell in love with the other side without ever really coming to terms with the first.¹¹ He knew that 'underneath the patina of gentility remained the more notorious elements of what was essentially a rough-and-tumble California frontier town.'¹² He had worked with migrants on the huge nearby Spreckels Ranch and spent his teenage years getting around Salinas, including Chinatown, its red-light district and Mexican neighbourhoods as well Pacific Grove, Monterey and Cannery Row.¹³ He was well aware of the other, the shady side of human nature.

Once out from under the family umbrella he rejected most of the Christian faith and much of the practice. Religion and life seemed incompatible, organised orthodox religion hypocritical and unable to relate to daily living. He never became a firm believer though he mellowed with

¹¹ Writing shortly after the publication of *East of Eden*, he wrote, 'man is a double thing — a group animal and at the same time an individual' (and) 'he cannot successfully become the second until he has fulfilled the first'. ('Some Thoughts on Juvenile Delinquency', in *The Saturday Review*, May 28, 1955).

¹² John H Timmerman, *Introduction to John Steinbeck, The Long Valley* (New York: Penguin Twentieth Century Classics, 1995).

¹³ Thomas Kiernan, *The Intricate Music*, pp. 20, 42-5.

the years and became increasingly sensitive to religious experience and to the faiths of others.¹⁴

A short story, *Saint Katy the Virgin*, published when he was in his mid-thirties but drafted when he was at Stanford, gives us a peep into the tension between the two worlds and the way his mind was going.¹⁵ It shows him even then wrestling with a sensitivity to traditional religious practices on the one hand and a totally different set of beliefs and behaviour on the other.

Question number one. How come that Katy, of good lineage, simply by giving vent to her baser nature becomes ‘the terror of the neighbourhood’, and ‘a legendary sinner’?¹⁶

Stepping Stone Two — Life in the Shanties

After leaving Stanford a young Monterey high school teacher introduced him to a poor Mexican *paisano* community of shanties on a flat in the hills above the town.¹⁷ Here Steinbeck encountered a world so different from the one he grew up in. He liked it and was drawn to it, or (to be more precise) to the people in it. These were the people who lived on the other side of the valley, whose stories you can read in *Tortilla Flat* (1935) and *Cannery Row* (1945). They also provided the raw material for the Trasks.

The Trasks were ‘the flotsam of society’, people on the margins, ‘on the verge of loneliness, dependent on one another for survival’, ‘the gathered and the scattered’, the publicans and sinners, the rejects of an established society, an amoral fringe maybe, but in this interconnectedness of lives Steinbeck found both companionship and true life. Here he found what *is*, not what might be nor even necessarily what ought to be.

The Trasks knew what it was always to be on the wrong side, not necessarily of the law but of every desk or counter. Like Cain, they knew what it was to have their offering rejected. They knew the shame, the hurt, the puzzlement as to why, while still having to get on with their lives. They also knew (and the Hamiltons knew) that they lived in two different worlds, and the Hamiltons wanted to keep it that way.

¹⁴ John H Timmerman, *The Dramatic Landscape of Steinbeck's Short Stories* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1990), p. 144.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-47, 189, 191.

¹⁷ Sue Gregory, an aspiring poet with a folkloric interest in these people in whose poverty and illiteracy she found a dignity and sense of humour that inspired her to write poems about them (Kiernan, *The Intricate Music*, p. 177.)

Question number two. How come we can have two people (Cain and Abel), two communities (Hamiltons and Trasks) each feeding off and exploiting the other in merciless fashion in the interests of self-preservation and survival?

Stepping Stone Three — Life in Corral del Tierra

When Steinbeck was coming up to 30, he called on an aunt in the Corral de Tierra, a neighbouring remote valley, nestling in the rocky hills and very isolated. Ever since the arrival of the Monroes in 1870, that valley had suffered one disaster after another. No family escaped some kind of trauma and in no case could the tragedy be traced to their doorstep. His aunt told him the stories and her stories provided the seed for *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932),¹⁸ which tell us a lot.

They tell us of misfits (Tularecito), people whose gifts and skills go unrecognised (Miss Morgan), whose lives are destroyed by gossip (the Lopez Sisters), the trials of a child not of sound mind (Hilda van Deventer), and a man hung up on his parents (Pat Humbert). Every one knows what it is to have their ‘offering’ either rejected or (much worse) ignored.

But why? Not one was particularly wicked. None did anything to deserve what happened to them. None knew why it happened to *them*, and the local gossip, suggesting that the Valley was cursed following the arrival of the Monroes, really didn’t stand up. Surely this could not be a valley. In the words of the Lord to Cain, ‘cursed from the ground, which had opened its mouth to receive (a) brother’s blood’,¹⁹ following up his earlier curse on Eve.²⁰

The questions wouldn’t go away. Could there be a thread that held them all together? Could it be the fruit of human conflicts between the residents, or tensions between individuals and social structures? These people are neither Hamiltons nor Trasks, they are simply human beings. As if we were all children of Cain, searching for an answer nobody can offer?

Question number three. Is evil an essential and inevitable part of the human experience, one of the consequences of being born from which nobody escapes?

Steinbeck’s writings all reflect a natural empathy with these people. The gaps between the two worlds and the ensuing conflicts worried him. Why so? Who is responsible? Who is to blame? Does it have to be like

¹⁸ Kiernan, *Intricate Music*, pp. 163-4.

¹⁹ Genesis 4: 11.

²⁰ Genesis 3: 14-19.

this? Can people help it, or help themselves, or do some people never have a choice? At this point Steinbeck doesn't have an answer, but at least he is beginning to identify the questions.

Stepping Stone Four — Life in the Wider World

From this point Steinbeck begins to see that the two-world theory has much wider implications and *In Dubious Battle* (1936) explores the two worlds in a political context.

This started as a journalistic account of a strike, the fruit of experience sharing life with migrant workers in a Migrant Camp, north of Sacramento,²¹ but when his publisher suggested it be written as fiction, he used that small strike in an orange valley as the symbol of man's eternal, bitter warfare within himself, as Capitalists and Communists lock horns, with Capitalists unable to change, Communists wanting change but only so that they could set up an equally unchanging structure, when both are actually and obsessively wedded to the *status quo*, leaving the uneducated masses as the pawns on the chess board. The two worlds here are not Capitalists and Communists but those who have power and those who don't. Strikes and social justice are the symptoms. The conflict is in the human being.

In Dubious Battle is a reflection of the conflict within Steinbeck himself²² and demonstrates Steinbeck's ambivalence between the individual and the community. The Hamiltons regarded individuality as 'eccentric and undesirable', something to be sacrificed in the interests of the whole respected community. Childhood reading led Steinbeck to nurture and expand his individuality. As he grew older he developed an interest in Transcendentalism,²³ with its emphasis on the individual as opposed to society, but he can never quite work out how the two relate to each other.

On the one hand, he warms to the concept of 'westering', as on the Day of Pentecost when a rushing mighty wind took hold of a vast congregation and changed their lives, but then on the other he is worried when he sees how easily a person may lose (or surrender) individuality and be taken over by a Mob. In the end he settles for some fluidity concluding (not altogether convincingly) that

²¹ (Elaine Steinbeck & Robert Wallsten (eds.), *Steinbeck. A Life in Letters* (London: Heinemann, 1975), pp. 98-99, 129).

²² Kiernan, *The Intricate Music*, pp. 194-5.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 124, 138.

. . . man is a double thing — a group animal and at the same time an individual (and) he cannot successfully become the second until he has fulfilled the first.²⁴

We referred earlier to the fact that Steinbeck came from one side of the Valley and fell in love with the other side without every really coming to terms with the first.

Question number four. Could it be that the two worlds are actually one?

Stepping Stone Five — Life in Relationships

Of Mice and Men (1937) takes this one stage further. George and Lennie are two farm labourers who go round picking up work where they can. They are both lonely individuals in a world which is riddled with loners, but the bond between these two is strong.

George is the strong guy. Lennie is a dependent scatterbrain who lives in a fantasy world, but they need each other, belong to each other, can really only exist as a pair, and in the end when George has to take responsibility for shooting Lennie he knows that the death of Lennie is the death of George. Now are they two, or are they really one?

Once we begin to see George and Lennie, not as two more loners, but as two expressions of a single unit, each finding fulfilment only in the other, we enter the one world of aloneness and relationships,²⁵ which brings us to **question number five**: ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’²⁶

We are back to Cain and Abel. All traditional interpretations of Cain and Abel seemed to offer was two worlds where one half killed the other and had to learn to live with the guilt, while the world moved on. There had to be something more and Steinbeck is beginning to discover it.

The Two Worlds don’t go away — light and dark, good and evil, them and us, individual and community, and so on — but once we conceive the possibility that they may be one the lines of demarcation become more blurred and less rigid and questions of relationships and responsibilities take precedence. *East of Eden* was his attempt to work it out.

²⁴ ‘Some Thoughts on Juvenile Delinquency’, in *The Saturday Review*, 28 May, 1955. For a fuller treatment of this fluidity of thought between the individual and the community and the way in which it approximates to Old Testament scholarship where we find a similar tension, see Alec Gilmore, ‘Did Steinbeck Know Wheeler Robinson or his Theory of Corporate Personality’, in *Steinbeck Studies*, Vol 15, No 1, Spring 2004, pp. 73-87.

²⁵ William Goldhurst, ‘*Of Mice and Men*: John Steinbeck’s Parable of the Curse of Cain’, in Jackson J Benson (ed.), *The Short Novels of John Steinbeck* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990), pp. 48-59.

²⁶ Genesis 4: 9.

Content and Characterisation

So how do all these questions and tensions work out in *East of Eden* and to what conclusion? Since my thesis is that, in the end, what he gave us is a treatise on the nature and price of evil (or the human predicament) the heart of the story has to be Cathy.

Cathy

Cathy is neither a Hamilton nor a Trask. She is a woman with an incredible capacity to unsettle others. She is specifically introduced as a monster,²⁷ the very epitome of evil, complex yet simple, frightening yet fascinating, easy to spot yet difficult to understand and, with no conscience, no human reaction, virtually impossible to handle. You never know what she wants and it is difficult to get into her mind.²⁸ All that matters is what matters to Cathy. She is the essence of our common humanity at its worst.

Steinbeck admits it would be difficult to imagine a worse character, or even one as bad. Even writing about her was painful.²⁹ As a teenager she murders her parents and becomes a prostitute. On her wedding night she gives an overdose of sleeping medicine to her husband, Adam, and spends the night with his brother (Charles). Don't miss the initials A and C.

From the start Steinbeck was well aware that some people would not believe in her, but he had no doubt that 'Cathys' really do exist.³⁰ He also knows that some readers who hate her will still be drawn to her, as people are always drawn to evil, and will soon forget that she is evil, possibly because she is a little piece of the monster within us all.³¹

Despite that, perhaps because of that, he makes her the fulcrum for the whole story, not because she is a monster but because she is the most powerful influence on her husband, Adam, and their two sons, and the catalyst for change in most of the others.³² Even more important, there is

²⁷ Steinbeck, *East of Eden*, p. 80.

²⁸ John Steinbeck, *Journal of a Novel. The East of Eden Letters* (London: Heinemann, 1970, and Pan Books, 1972), pp. 55-56, 60, 122-24. 'As a very young child she had learned to win by using the momentum of her opponent. It was easy to guide a man's strength where it was impossible to resist him.' (*East of Eden*, p. 177). Samuel Hamilton finds her disturbing (p. 198) and for Lee she is 'a mystery . . . not like other people . . . full of heartless hatred' (p. 494) [Page references are from the Heinemann edition, with dates of the letters for those using other editions].

²⁹ Writing chapter 20 in particular giving him bad dreams. (Steinbeck, *Journal of a Novel. The East of Eden Letters*, p. 123.)

³⁰ 'If one can be born with a twisted and deformed face or body, one can surely also come into the world with a malformed soul.' Steinbeck, *Journal of a Novel. The East of Eden Letters*, p. 58.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 59.

something of Cathy in us all and therefore she is the key to understanding ourselves and others.

I have no difficulty with Steinbeck's 'Cathy'. I think 'Cathys' do exist, though extreme versions fortunately are rare, but I think he created Cathy as he did because he wanted to create a character larger than life, not so much a person as an overwhelming power; the apotheosis of evil on the one hand, the personification of our common humanity on the other, and I find support for this idea in two places.

First, in *The Grapes of Wrath* Steinbeck tells how, in the 1930s, thanks to the Dust Bowl, 90,000 people in Oklahoma found themselves uprooted, lost their homes and their jobs, and became refugees, many of them making their way to California in search of a better life. The underlying cause was nothing that any particular individual or group did. They all suddenly found themselves in a new world where one tractor could do the work of a dozen families,³³ where landowners were in hock to the banks and 'the bank is something more than men . . . It's the monster. Men made it but they can't control it.'³⁴

This alerted Steinbeck to an impersonal power which manifests itself, in different ways and at different times, in all large institutions — in that case it was the banks and big business, but it might just as easily be politicians, governments, landowners, even the church — an impenetrable force with an agenda all its own which shows little concern for people, individuals or groups once their interests conflict with the institution's own agenda.

For Steinbeck, sin is not just a few misdeeds, nor the result of a few wicked people, nor the occasional wrongs we all do to one another; sin is the evil that is generic within humanity (or even creation), going back to the Garden of Eden. It is an independent, exterior and mighty force whose ways are not the ways of most people whose lives are deeply disrupted by it.

Some might describe it as original sin,³⁵ others as pure self-interest. Some may call it the devil. Norwegians speak of trolls, New Testament

³³ J Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (Pan Books, 1975), pp. 38, 124.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

³⁵ Steinbeck gave this as one of the reasons that led him to the title for the book in the first place (Steinbeck, *Journal of a Novel. The East of Eden Letters*, p. 116) and Cathy's own assessment of her contempt for people goes back to her childhood, where we see the macrocosm in the microcosm. 'When I was a little girl I knew what stupid lying fools they were — my own mother and father pretending goodness. And they weren't good. I knew them. I could make them do whatever I wanted. I could always make people do whatever I wanted.' (*East of Eden*, p. 358).

believers of principalities and powers,³⁶ all those hidden forces which are entirely beyond our control and which affect us all in various ways. With a problem of that magnitude Steinbeck had to have a Cathy and the institutions in *The Grapes of Wrath* have become Cathy in *East of Eden*.

Second, we know from his letters that Steinbeck had a yen for the iconic figure. When John Kennedy was assassinated he referred to him as a 'myth' and when Jackie reacted sharply he explained what he meant. Citing the Buddha, Jove, Apollo and Jesus, some people are 'myths', he wrote, in the sense that they are just larger than life. They are significant individuals who embody characteristics and concepts such as authority, heroism, pride, and victory which are permanent; their stature grows with the years and they have influence long after they are gone, and if you can have iconic virtue you can also have iconic evil. That is Cathy.

The Twins (Adam and Charles)

To tell the story of Cathy, Steinbeck then gives us the Twins, Adam and Charles or (if you prefer) Cain and Abel.

Their father, an army character, decides Adam needs the army to make a man of him. Charles, on the other hand, is made for the army and therefore doesn't need it. The tensions are built in. When they are children they each give their father a present. Adam finds a stray puppy which costs him nothing, and his father absolutely adores it. Charles struggles to give him an expensive Swiss knife and his father barely says thank you and never uses it. The inbuilt tensions become a running sore. They mature in different ways and live in separate worlds, though not entirely without contact.

Adam

Adam, who marries Cathy, is a typical Hamilton — an individual in a fairly tight and regimented society who 'grew up in greyness . . . the curtains of his life . . . like dusty cobwebs, and his days a slow file of half sorrows and sick dissatisfactions . . . rich without pleasure and respected without friends'. He needed first the army and then Cathy who, despite being a monster and regarding him with low esteem,³⁷ 'set off the glory' in him.³⁸

Unlike Cathy, Adam is very real and believable but he is weak, with no fierceness, doesn't know what he wants and allows people to trample all

³⁶ Ephesians 6:12. Cf 'cosmic powers of this present darkness' (NRSV) and 'cosmic powers . . . the authorities and potentates of this dark age' (REB).

³⁷ She addresses him as 'Mr Mouse' (*East of Eden*, p. 427).

³⁸ *East of Eden*, pp.147-49 (Chapter 13).

over him.³⁹ Every Hamilton could recognise him. He is content in his own world, finds all change difficult (unless he initiates it which he rarely does), and neither sees nor hears much of what is going on around him, preferring to maintain his image of the world even when it has changed beyond all recognition and is tumbling round his ears.⁴⁰ Adam lives in a world he has invented for himself. He doesn't even hear when Cathy tells him she is leaving him, shows no emotion, and goes on living with the Cathy he had invented.⁴¹

Towards the end, when he does grow up,⁴² and it is a painful process, he sums it up in a confidential moment when he tells his son, Cal, 'My father made a mould and forced me into it. I was a bad casting but I couldn't be re-melted. Nobody can . . .',⁴³

Just occasionally, he shows himself capable of rising to heights of glory, but like most Hamiltons, he lives in a world where he feels trapped, a victim of forces beyond his control. The cards have been dealt. He must live with the hand he has been given. In a moment of enlightenment he might stumble on the question, 'Does it have to be like this and can I do nothing about it?', but he knows he cannot answer it. It *is*, and therefore it *is*.

Charles

Charles (the Cain element) is a Trask, who grew up in the same broad environment and is totally different, but it would be no more accurate to call him 'bad' than to call Adam 'good'. Both are good and bad but in different ways.

To his father, he is the favourite. To Adam, he is a 'destructive machine that chops down anything standing in its way'.⁴⁴ To his stepmother, he is 'all rough shell, all anger until you know him', and Charles responds by leaving her small presents,⁴⁵ very much a reflection of the way Steinbeck saw and portrayed the Trasks.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 30. When Liza Hamilton attended Cathy on the birth of the twins she later described Adam to her husband as 'a sick duck' who 'moved around as if he was alive but he left no evidence' (*East of Eden*, pp. 222-23).

⁴⁰ 'Adam has a picture of his life and he will continue to maintain his picture against every influence until his world comes down.' (Steinbeck, *Journal of a Novel. The East of Eden Letters*, pp. 99-100).

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 141; *East of Eden*, p. 291.

⁴² Steinbeck, *Journal of a Novel. The East of Eden Letters*, p. 169. End of Chapter 28, *East of Eden* p. 402.

⁴³ *East of Eden*, p. 501.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 32.

⁴⁵ ' . . . pretty things you wouldn't think he'd even notice. But he doesn't give them outright. He hides them where he knows I'll find them. And you can look at him for hours and he won't even give the slightest hint he did it.' *East of Eden*, p. 36.

Charles knows all this and suffers from a massive dose of insecurity,⁴⁶ even guilt, but takes life as it comes. In a world where he was not so much rejected as ignored, and with gifts which were not appreciated or even noticed, he is content to ignore the traditional rather than to challenge it. His cards too have been dealt. You could meet him any day. He has an enormous chip on his shoulder and years after the event, in a letter to his brother,⁴⁷ he is still smarting from that rejection of the penknife. It would be an over simplification to say that Adam (Abel) got it right and Charles (Cain) got it wrong. The penknife and the pup were no more than a scratch. It is not even that one was accepted and the other not. What bites deep with Charles, and with any Trask, is the sense of unfairness, having no choice, never really knowing what was expected. How come Adam managed as he did? Yet even then it is none of these things, every one of which he could have lived with, that really matters. What draws blood is that he put so much effort into that penknife and Adam virtually did nothing. Surely that can't be right, and that is a problem which afflicts all humanity, the Hamiltons as much as the Trasks.

Steinbeck's first plan was to tell the story of the Hamiltons and the Trasks in alternate chapters but he soon came to the conclusion that it would not work, because in reality they were not two separate peoples, but one. In Salinas Valley good and evil, acceptance and rejection, the desire to please and serve others whilst retaining personal freedom and autonomy, and a host of other tensions vied with each other for recognition and power in both groups. What was true of one was just as true of the other.

So can we think of Adam and Charles (Abel and Cain) not as two but as one, and so begin to see the world through new, and different, eyes with a potential to increase both our understanding and sensitivity.

The Next Generation

With that possibility in mind, we move on to Steinbeck's treatment of the next generation. Adam has two sons, Aron and Cal (notice the initials).

The two are every bit as different, only this time Cal is favourite, and Aron the lost. Cal is dark-skinned, clever, smart, secretive; not popular but a natural leader, feared but not respected. Aron is shy, delicate and loved by all, but determined; once he has set his path nothing can change him.⁴⁸

Aron, set to be a priest, won people by his simplicity, was always well received, content to be part of the world he lived in and, to a fair

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 35.

⁴⁷ Steinbeck, *Journal of a Novel. The East of Eden Letters*, p. 42.

⁴⁸ *East of Eden*, pp. 467-68.

degree, to conform to it.⁴⁹ Cal drifted, craved for affection, was invariably rebuffed and had to endure loneliness but always felt he had to change the world⁵⁰ and inevitably lived with the frustration.

Yet Steinbeck makes it clear that Cal is *his* favourite,⁵¹ and presents Cal's problems as of a different order from those of Aron. Unlike Adam, Charles or Aron, Cal is at war with himself.⁵² He fears he has something of his mother (Cathy) in him and she confirms this fear⁵³ when he discovers that she is working as a whore not far away and goes to see her; he then tells Aron and forces Aron to go and see her, as a result of which Aron crumbles, gives up the priesthood, goes off to the army and gets killed, and the news of his death brings Adam to an early grave. So, as Cal tells his father on his deathbed,

I'm sorry, Father . . . I'm responsible for Aron's death and for your sickness . . . I showed him his mother. That's why he went away. I don't want to do bad things — but I do them.

You could say Cal opened Aron's eyes to evil and now, like all Trasks, he has to live with it and to carry the burden of guilt for everybody else.

So where now can Steinbeck turn for a light in this dark Valley? For the resolution he introduces two other characters. One is Abra, the other is Lee.

Abra

Abra is a young woman, who emerges as 'the strong female principle of good as opposed to Cathy'. She is a secondary and less developed character but one whom Steinbeck intends us to see as 'an effective human being' whose 'strength will not be soft'.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 489-90. The sharp difference between those who take life as it comes and those who feel the need to change it, as reflected in the differences between Aron and Cal, but also present in Abel and Charles, is summed up in a conversation between Samuel and Liza on the birth of Adam's twins. Samuel is setting off to go and ensure that the twins are satisfactorily named. Liza thrusts a Bible in his hand, upbraids him 'for ever picking at it and questioning it' and when he says he is only trying to understand it she replies, 'What is there to understand? Just read it. There it is in black and white. Who wants you to understand it? If the Lord God wanted you to understand it, He'd have given you to understand or He'd have set it down different.' (*East of Eden*, pp. 284-85).

⁵⁰ If Aron were to find an ant-hill in the bush he would lie on his stomach and watch the complications of ant life. If Cal found it he would kick it to pieces and watch the ants as they sort out the disaster (*East of Eden*, p. 388).

⁵¹ Steinbeck & R Wallsten (eds.), *Steinbeck. A Life in Letters*, p. 429, 11 September, 1951.

⁵² *East of Eden*, pp. 501-03.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 514.

⁵⁴ 'Please watch Abra,' he writes. 'She is terribly important.' (Steinbeck, *Journal of a Novel. The East of Eden Letters*, pp. 180-81, 184-86).

Aron, being a Hamilton, not surprisingly falls in love with her but she rejects him because he has never grown up, lives in a make-believe world, and could not face the truth about his mother because it did not fit in with his fairy-tale world. She falls for Cal and a gentle love affair springs up between them. So when Cal finds the burden of guilt intolerable and decides to run away it is to Abra that he turns and asks her to go with him. Abra agrees to go but only on condition that they do not run away.

Abra is perceptive as well as strong. She saw through Aron's problems and had the strength of character to bring the relationship to an end.⁵⁵ She knew all about Cathy before Cal told her and explains that she too has an unfortunate past. They all have skeletons in their cupboards. On the one hand Abra is part of the one, same basic humanity. A Trask in a dark Valley. On the other, she lives as one from another planet, incarnate, neither a Hamilton nor a Trask, with qualities of perception, objectivity and a freedom denied to many, the messenger of hope and the source of strength for all.

To get it across he turns to Lee.

Lee

Lee, Adam's cook,⁵⁶ is a narrator. Like Abra, he too seems to come from and live in another world, and he and Abra have much in common. With a watchful eye and a listening ear, Lee enables people to see and understand what is going on around them and so becomes the catalyst for the resolution of the novel.

When Cal is at rock bottom, consumed with guilt and hopelessness, it is Lee who attempts to change Cal's image of himself by explaining that, like everyone else, he is simply a flawed human being, but every bit as much the child of a good man as of an evil woman and always to remember that he is in control of his destiny. Nobody is beyond hope and we don't have to become like our parents. 'If a craftsman, even in his old age, still lives with the urge to make a perfect cup', he says, 'can Cal not understand that whoever made us would stop trying?'.⁵⁷

Then he comes to this crucial word, *timshol*, with his shrewd interpretation of Genesis 4: 7:

Sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but *timshol*.

⁵⁵ *East of Eden*, pp. 546-48, 637-41.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 664.

English translations speak with a variety of voices, depending on how the translators saw sin (or evil). Versions vary from command (You must rule), to inevitable submission (You will be overcome), with pious hope (You ought to rule) and modest encouragement (You can rule) somewhere in between. Lee says, 'Thou mayest'. Not a command, not a threat, not even a pious hope, but an open door.

Whether it is a legitimate translation of the Hebrew has been much questioned. but Steinbeck consulted a rabbi friend who said it was OK and a distinguished Hebraist acquaintance of mine assures me that the rabbi was right. That is not to say definitively 'that is what it means', and nobody can claim to know what it meant 3000 years ago. What we can say is that it is one of a number of possibilities, yet one more example that 'you don't have to' but 'you may'.

Conclusion

Nobody, least of all Steinbeck, is going to argue that rejection (pain and suffering) are a good thing but what Steinbeck has come to see is that rejection and frustration are a fundamental part of our humanity, and can be an impetus to enable us to fulfil ourselves.⁵⁸ The issue is not whether we are accepted or rejected but what we do with what happens to us. That is our choice.

This is the key which unlocks the guilt, redeems the offender and releases new life. His interpretation of *timshol* is that things don't have to be as bad as they are but change requires us to receive forgiveness for ourselves (Adam) and to offer forgiveness to others (Cal), to accept responsibility for what *is* (which is broader than what *we* have done — Abra) and to claim the responsibility (one might almost say the human right) to see and do things differently (Abra and Cal together).

So instead of thinking of good and evil as metaphysical realities, existing in ideal forms in different people, making some people naturally and irredeemably evil (Cain) and others naturally and incorruptibly good (Abel), we are all a mixture of the two, with power to choose how we respond.

Postscript

East of Eden begins with the Gabilans and the Santa Lucias. Steinbeck does not return to them at the end. Instead he gives us a picture of Cal, the child

⁵⁸ In conversation with Samuel Lee says that rejection and its consequences is the story of mankind and without it 'the human would not be what he is'. (*East of Eden*, p. 300).

of an evil monster, redeemed, sitting side by side with Abra, the quixotic essence of goodness, the two who make it to the Promised Land,⁵⁹ calmly relaxed and chatting between the light and dark of the Mountains, dangling their feet in the gentle stream which comes from the side of the rising sun and ‘bumbles over round stones and washes the polished roots of the trees that hold it in’, before making its way to the ocean of eternity.

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⁵⁹ *East of Eden*, pp. 300-02.

Reading Genesis with the Church Fathers: metaphors of creation in John Chrysostom's *Homilies on Genesis*

Rosa Hunt

Introduction

This essay studies Chrysostom's theology of creation as conveyed in his *Homilies on Genesis*. I argue that in the first five of these homilies, Chrysostom employs three major metaphors for creation: creation as a *work of art*, creation as an *example or teacher* and creation as an *act of love*.

A seminal work on Chrysostom's rhetoric is Margaret Mitchell's *Heavenly Trumpet*.¹ In this work Mitchell identifies and analyses literary features of Chrysostom's preaching; however she restricts her work to Chrysostom's sermons on the Pauline epistles. In this paper I have used Mitchell's analysis as a conversation partner in order to allow the metaphors used by Chrysostom to speak of his theology. I then engage with the work of the Orthodox scholar John Breck to explore the insights these metaphors give us into Chrysostom's exegesis.

The author: John Chrysostom

The time and place of John Chrysostom's birth meant that his theology was forged in the fires of the post-Nicene struggle for orthodoxy, and his sermons must be understood in this light.

John, later to be called Chrysostom (Golden Mouth), was born in Antioch between 344 and 354 CE.² He received a thoroughly Graeco-Roman education. At about fourteen Chrysostom started his studies under the famous rhetorician Libanios who announced on his deathbed that he would have wished Chrysostom to succeed him in the chair of rhetoric 'had not the Christians stolen him from us'.³

While the education Chrysostom received may have represented an unchanging commitment to Hellenistic values, politically and theologically things were far less stable. The antics of Julian the Apostate, who used Antioch as a base, meant that the fortunes of Christians in the city

¹ Margaret Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet – John Chrysostom and the art of Pauline interpretation* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

² Kelly argues for 349: J N D Kelly, *Golden Mouth: the story of John Chrysostom - ascetic, preacher, bishop* (Duckworth Press: London, 1995), p. 4.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

fluctuated wildly.⁴ Chrysostom must have been painfully aware from his teenage days that imperial patronage was a valuable trump card, and in his later sermons there can sometimes be detected a tension between Chrysostom's desire to be outspoken about the truth and his need to placate his imperial employer.

Theologically, the landscape was just as unsettled, and these tensions were reflected on the ground in Antioch. In 325 the Council of Nicaea had decreed that within the indivisible Godhead, the Son was *of the same essence or being* as the Father. This was a response to the Arian claim that the Son was a creature, superior to other creatures, but inferior in essence to the Father. Since 331 the see of Antioch had been controlled by a succession of Arian bishops, but the influence of Constantius and then the disruptive counter-influence of Julian meant that as Chrysostom was growing up, Antioch had no fewer than three competing bishops – at the same time! The combination of this theological controversy with Chrysostom's rhetorical training meant that Chrysostom's sermons were fiery denunciations of 'heretical' positions, for 'orthodoxy' was as yet still too insecure for competing points of view to be given an airing.

The *Homilies on Genesis* studied in this paper were preached during Lent, and in them Chrysostom makes frequent reference to the importance of fasting and self-privation. This attitude almost certainly dates from the years immediately following his baptism when, fleeing forcible ordination, he seems to have fled to the 'huts of the monks' on the nearby Mount Silpios, living a strictly ascetic lifestyle.⁵

By the end of 378 Chrysostom had returned to Antioch where he was eventually ordained to the priesthood, probably in early 386, and for the next twelve years built up a reputation as an outstanding orator. The *Homilies on Genesis* studied in this paper were almost certainly preached during this period.⁶

In October 397 Chrysostom received an unexpected summons and was summarily consecrated bishop of Constantinople, the New Rome. Here it was to be the affair of the Long Brothers which triggered Chrysostom's downfall. These tall monks had become a focus for persecution by Theophilus, the patriarch of Alexandria, ostensibly because they were Origenists. The brothers took refuge in Constantinople, where Chrysostom attempted to deal with the situation with tact, sending a conciliatory letter to Theophilus and forbidding the Long Brothers to talk publicly about the

⁴ It was from Antioch that Julian the Apostate led the Roman army in March 363 to the banks of the Tigris, where he was killed in June of that same year. Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, p. 9.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 32-35.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 55 ff.

injustice they had suffered. However, the situation degenerated and eventually Chrysostom was forced to stand trial at the infamous Synod of the Oak, resulting in a double exile, and eventually his death on the 14th September 407.⁷

The text being studied

This paper is based on Hill's translation and critical edition of Chrysostom's 67 *Homilies on Genesis*. This is the first translation to be made into English and also the only modern critical edition.⁸ In addition I have regularly consulted the Greek edition which was first published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and on which Hill depends for his translation.⁹

Chrysostom's writings on Genesis comprise a series of 9 'sermons' and a series of 67 'homilies'. There is currently no critical English edition of the nine sermons on Genesis. The first eight show a strong similarity (sometimes verbatim) to the early *Homilies on Genesis* and there is little agreement among scholars about whether their labelling as *sermons* rather than homilies is significant.¹⁰ Kelly, however, proposes the solution that just a few weeks after being ordained, Chrysostom preached a course of at least nine sermons on Genesis. A few years later, probably in 389, he expanded this to produce a series of 67 *Homilies* expounding Genesis from beginning to end. Kelly believes that he delivered the first 32 during Lent, and the remaining 35 after Whitsunday of the same year.¹¹

Which scriptural sources did Chrysostom use for his quotations?¹² Hill, following Baur, suggests that Chrysostom's source for scriptural quotations may have been the revision of Origen's reconstruction of the LXX by the priest Lucian in Antioch. However, as Baur points out, Chrysostom often quoted Scripture rather freely from memory.¹³ This *interpretive citation* is a common occurrence in patristic literature.¹⁴

⁷ Ibid., pp. 191-285.

⁸ Robert C Hill, *Saint John Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis 1-17* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986).

⁹ This was the edition of Brian De Montfaucon, whose text and introduction J P Migne reproduces in his 1858-60 Paris edition: Jacques Paul Migne and Ferdinand Cavallera, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus ... Series Græca, etc. Gr. & Lat*, 1857, vol.53.

¹⁰ Hill, *Saint John Chrysostom*, p. 4.

¹¹ Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, p. 89.

¹² Chrysostom could not read the original Hebrew: 'those with a precise knowledge of the language tell us that among the Hebrews the word "heaven" is used in the plural, and those who know the language of the Syrians confirm this'. *Hom. Gen.* 4.10.

¹³ Chrysostomus Baur, *John Chrysostom And His Time. Volume I : Antioch* (Sands & Co, 1959), p. 318.

¹⁴ See for instance Bruce N Fisk, 'One Good Story Deserves Another', in Craig A Evans (ed.), *The interpretation of scripture in early Judaism and Christianity: studies in language and tradition*, Studies in

Each homily (except the first) starts with the day's Bible reading, and is usually linked in to the homily for the day before. After a lengthy exegesis of the text, Chrysostom usually provides a parennetic conclusion ending with a prayer and a trinitarian doxology:¹⁵

May we all reach [the life to come] through the love and goodness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory, sovereignty and praise, now and forever, for ages of ages. Amen.¹⁶

Reading Chrysostom with Margaret Mitchell

How can Chrysostom's sermons be read by us in the twenty-first century today? What do we need to understand about his thought world if we are to be able to hear his sermons as he might have intended his listeners to hear them?

Margaret Mitchell identifies the concept of the *archetypal image* as the key to unlocking Chrysostom's interpretation of Paul. She makes much of Chrysostom's belief that Paul's epistles give the reader an opportunity to gaze into Paul's soul as though they were looking into an 'archetypal image'¹⁷ (καὶ ὥσπερ εἰς ἀρχέτυπον εἰκόνα τινὰ). Interestingly enough, this quotation is actually from the Homilies on Genesis (*Hom. Gen.* 11.12).¹⁸ Mitchell argues that this concept of the *archetypal image* is key to understanding Chrysostom's interpretation of Paul, which has as two of its three major components the *ethics of imitation* and Greco-Roman *epistolary theory*.¹⁹

Taking epistolary theory first, Mitchell explains how in patristic theology, Scripture served as a 'verbal icon'. This grew out of the Greco-Roman belief that a letter conveyed a portrait of the soul of its author. Mitchell points out that a letter 'serves to mediate ... the complex dynamic of presence and absence', and that Chrysostom would have been completely familiar with this aspect of epistolary theory through his training in the school of the great rhetorician Libanios.²⁰

Moving on to the ethics of imitation, Mitchell explains that this was the ancient pedagogical belief that learning takes place by imitation of

scripture in early Judaism and Christianity 7 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 217-239.

¹⁵ Hill, *Saint John Chrysostom*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁶ *Hom. Gen.* 2.15.

¹⁷ Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, p. 43 – Mitchell's translation. The third component is Chrysostom's view of Scripture as a relic.

¹⁸ Hill translates the phrase as 'an exemplary model'.

¹⁹ Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, p. 49.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

exemplary figures. Thus the ἀρχέτυπος εἰκὼν of Paul in the letters allows the reader to peer into Paul's very soul and enables them to imitate his virtue. It is Chrysostom's task to help his listeners reconstruct the icon of Paul, and he does this by painting a picture of him with words in his homilies.²¹

Metaphors of Creation in Chrysostom's *Homilies on Genesis*

The question which poses itself is: *are Mitchell's concepts of the imitation of the archetypal image and the epistolary mediation of presence as crucial to understanding Chrysostom's homilies on Genesis as they are his sermons on Paul?* In order to address this question, the following section identifies the three main metaphors of creation I have found in my reading of the *Homilies on Genesis*.

Metaphor: Creation as Example or Teacher

Chrysostom poses the question: *why* does Moses tell the story of the creation? His answer is that when humans fell into evil ways, God stopped speaking to men face to face but

wanted to renew his love for them; he sent them letters (γράμματα) as you do to people far away from you, and this drew all humankind back again to him. It was God who sent them letters, Moses who delivered them. What do the letters say? 'In the beginning God made heaven and earth'.²²

The stories of the creation in Genesis are God's letters conveying God's own words:

we ... listen to these words not as the words of Moses but as the words of the God of all things coming to us through the tongue (γλώττης) of Moses.²³

This brings us to one of Chrysostom's great themes: the συνκαταβασις of God, which Hill translates as God's *considerateness*.²⁴ This considerateness is shown because of our human ἀσθενεια (*limitations* and not *weakness*) and springs from God's φιλανθρωπια or *love*.²⁵ God's

²¹ Ibid., p. 51.

²² *Hom. Gen.*, 2.4.

²³ Ibid., 2.6.

²⁴ Not his '*condescension*', which Hill considers a patronising mis-translation. Hill, *Saint John Chrysostom*, 42, 58: footnotes.

²⁵ *Hom. Gen.* 3.15.

συνκαταβασις is seen not only in his creating the universe in such a way that our feeble minds could grasp truths about him, but also in the way that he inspired Moses to give a simplified account of creation to his primitive readers so that they could grasp it. This account is to be contrasted with the creation account given in John 1 to a more spiritually awakened readership:

I mean, since mankind was yet untutored and could not understand more elaborate matters, the Holy Spirit accordingly explained everything to us by moving the author's tongue in such a way as to take account of the limitations of the listeners. To be convinced that it was on account of the incompleteness of our understanding that he employed such considerateness in his explanation, compare the approach of the Son of Thunder: when humankind had advanced along the path to perfection, no longer did he have them move by this lower way, but led his listeners to a loftier teaching.²⁶

Thus God teaches us about himself in two ways through the Genesis stories. First, the description of creation itself and the way in which it came about teaches us about God – his wisdom and power, his consummate skill, his inscrutability, his loving kindness, his considerateness. Next, the way in which he conveys this knowledge to us is through the Genesis texts, which are letters he has written to us as to an absent friend, that we may be drawn back to him. The very fact of the letters' existence reveals to us the loving kindness of God, but their nature also once again reveals his considerateness, as he uses words which can bridge the chasm in understanding between him and ourselves.

Chrysostom quotes Romans 1:20:

What the eye cannot see in him has come into view from the creation of the world and are understood through the things he has made.²⁷

Thus Chrysostom argues that the creation serves as an example or teacher to help us understand the things of God. These things can be the *attributes* of God, such as his wisdom and power. So, when the earth appeared formless at the beginning of creation,

this too was not done without purpose; his intention was that you would learn about his craftsmanship from the better part of creation, and so have no further doubts or think that it all happened out of a lack of power.²⁸

²⁶ Ibid., 3.7.

²⁷ Ibid., 2.11.

²⁸ Ibid., 2.12.

However, the things taught can also, counter-intuitively, be the *inscrutability* of God's ways. Chrysostom likens creation to a building or structure which is built

in a way contrary to human procedures, first stretching out the heavens and then laying out the earth beneath, first the roof and then the foundation.²⁹

This is to prevent us from using our human reasoning to

pry too closely ... into the works of God; instead let the works lead you to marvel at their maker.³⁰

Thus we see that through his use of the metaphor of creation as teacher, Chrysostom lays the theological foundations of God's *συνκαταβασις*. By linking this with our own human *ἀσθενεια* he necessarily reminds us of the chasm between creator and creation, and thus prepares his listener for a theology which must be in part apophatic. Preaching at the time of the heightened Arian threat, we can read this aspect of the metaphor as a polemical attack on Chrysostom's 'heretical' enemies. God uses creation to teach us not only his attributes, but also his inscrutability. As in Mitchell, both creation and scripture's account of creation serve as icons or letters, mediating God's presence in the midst of his absence. The Genesis account cannot be dismissed as false as the Marcionites would have it. Creation itself cannot be analysed by pure reason alone as some of the pagans would have it. Instead, creation and the creation account together bear witness to, and actually mediate, God's consummate skill and his love. These themes are picked up in the two other main metaphors I consider here.

Metaphor: Creation as Work of Art

For Chrysostom, creation is not just an example, it is an example of unsurpassable beauty and perfection:

God [is] the mighty artificer – *δημιουργος* – and creation is his masterpiece, wrought by his 'wonderful craftsmanship'.³¹

Humans, he argues, cannot even understand their own arts, such as 'how gold takes shape through the art of mining ... or how the purity of glass comes from sand',³² so how much less likely are they to be able to understand how the greatest work of art ever was fashioned:

²⁹ Ibid., 2.11.

³⁰ Ibid., 2.11.

³¹ Ibid., 3.5, 3.6, 5.11.

³² Ibid., 2.6.

I mean, if we see a human being's work brought to completion and marvel at its design, its position, its beauty, its proportion, its symmetry and everything else about it, how could anyone adequately praise what God has produced.³³

In Mitchell's analysis, Chrysostom sees Paul's letters as constructing an archetypal image, or ἀρχέτυπος εἰκων, into which the reader can gaze to see the very soul of Paul himself. In Chrysostom's homilies on Genesis, however, creation itself is the ἀρχέτυπος εἰκων, God's masterpiece, and the creation accounts are the verbal icon of creation, which Chrysostom brings to life for his listeners as he repaints the icon for them with colourful words in his homilies. Thus we see that Chrysostom introduces a theological nuance to his account of creation as teacher; the unsurpassable beauty of creation *if rightly understood* should lead humans not to dissect it but rather to worship the Creator. It is Chrysostom's task throughout his sermons to ensure that the creation account is rightly understood in this way, and so each sermon ends, as has been noted above, with a parenetic conclusion, a prayer and a Trinitarian doxology. Correct biblical exegesis will lead inevitably to worship. Chrysostom is not just an exegete but a priest and a disciple who has trained in the caves on Mount Silpios. As a disciple he reads the scripture in the light of his relationship with his Master, and as a priest he must use his scholarship to enable his people to meet their God in worship:

It is not after all idly and to no purpose that we have come here, for one person to do the talking and the other simply to applaud what is said, and so for us to go off home. Instead, it is for me to utter something useful and relevant to your salvation.³⁴

For Chrysostom, there is no other way to read the Bible.

Metaphor: Creation as Act of Love

I have already shown how Chrysostom's homilies on creation emphasise the themes of God's consummate skill and his considerateness. In the third main metaphor which Chrysostom uses, these two themes come together as he describes creation as an *act of love*.

The act of creation demonstrates God's φιλανθρωπία or love in two ways. First, it is an act of love because it brings order to a chaotic and shapeless universe. In Chrysostom's words, it 'remove[s] all this shapelessness and bring[s] everything to a condition of order' or

³³ Ibid., 4.11.

³⁴ Ibid., 1.3.

εὐχοσμίας.³⁵ At God's command 'the shapeless mass (ἀμόρφωτον) took on form'.³⁶ God gave each element in creation

its own place and defined its appropriate time. And when this had been done, he then gave each its proper name.³⁷

Time and again Chrysostom emphasises that God's 'ineffable power' is displayed in the immediate effect of his powerful word –

God had only to speak, and the effect followed immediately ...

He simply spoke, and the work followed. You see, this is God's way: created things are governed by his will.³⁸

Contrary to those who teach and believe that it is the stars or the sun which are 'responsible for the germination of the crops', Chrysostom asserts that the order and normal functioning of creation still remain, above all, dependent on 'the word of God, the same as was directed to it from the beginning'.³⁹

But why is the ordering of the universe itself an act of love? It is because for Chrysostom, the ultimate reason for this creating and ordering was our salvation –

The reason, you see, that he produced all created things and formed us was not that we should perish nor to consign us to punishment, but to save us, to free us from error and reward us with the enjoyment of the kingdom. This, after all, is what he prepared for us, not at this late stage after our coming into existence, but before the foundation of the world

... See the loving kindness (φιλανθρωπία) of the Lord...⁴⁰

This φιλανθρωπία of God is another of Chrysostom's great themes. Throughout his sermons we see constant references to God's love and mercy, and we know from contemporary accounts of his life that he was criticised for the tension in his preaching between the rigorous standards he expected from the richer portion of his congregation, and his constant offering of the unlimited mercy and love of God to the poor and the sinner.⁴¹ In his *Homilies on Genesis* we clearly see that God's act of creation was understood by Chrysostom as a great act of love towards us, a masterpiece created as a vehicle for our relationship with our Creator.

³⁵ Ibid., 3.3.

³⁶ Ibid., 3.5.

³⁷ Ibid., 3.6.

³⁸ Ibid., 4.6, 5.9.

³⁹ Ibid., 5.13.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 3.15.

⁴¹ Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 211.

Just as Mitchell heard Chrysostom urging his congregation to be imitators of Paul, so in these homilies we find that Chrysostom would like those who do not heed Scripture to take heed of the order of creation and imitate it. He urges:

people obdurate in their lack of response to come to faith and obedience to the words of Sacred Scripture so as to imitate the order in the elements, respecting as they do their course uninterruptedly, and not overstep their limitations but rather recognize the extent of their own nature.⁴²

After all, he argues, the order of creation testifies to the existence of the One who orders; how could

this immense universe and the design of all these elements ... happen simply by chance without anyone present with the power to guide it all, controlling and maintaining all things in existence from his innate wisdom ... ?⁴³

By simple inference therefore, all should deduce from the order of creation the existence of the loving creator, and should obey his words so as to bring to their own lives the order which they perceive around them.

Conclusion and Way Forward

This paper has shown that Chrysostom's metaphors of creation as teacher, creation as work of art and creation as act of love have served to illustrate certain key tenets of his theology, namely God's *συνκαταβασις* or *considerateness* and God's *φιλανθρωπια* or *loving kindness*. They have illustrated the apophatic aspect of Chrysostom's theology and emphasised the chasm between creator and creature, just as we would expect at a time when Arianism posed a real threat. We have seen that Chrysostom does not make sense of the creation story as an isolated pericope but rather as a key event in the soteriological history of mankind. We have also seen that as priest and disciple, Chrysostom chooses metaphors which lead the congregation to worship, to turn from their own rational conclusions to worshipping God himself. For Chrysostom, the creation accounts serve to mediate the very presence of God.

How do these insights into Chrysostom's exegesis fit into the received wisdom on patristic exegesis? The Orthodox scholar John Breck⁴⁴

⁴² *Hom. Gen.*, 3.10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.13.

⁴⁴ John Breck, *Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and its Interpretation in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), pp. 38-44.

argues that the church fathers believed that the ontological nature of the Christ is reflected in Scripture, which, like the Logos himself, is a *theandric* reality. Because it speaks not only into but also *out of* limited human contexts, it *necessarily* embodies ambiguity and limitation, and thus it must be constantly reinterpreted in every generation. For Breck there is only one proper place for this interpretation to happen: the Church – ‘exegesis is a function of the worshipping, witnessing community of faith’.⁴⁵ The fathers invoked the principle of *exegetical reciprocity* in which Old and New Testaments represented a unified witness to salvation-history and thus a difficult passage can be interpreted by an easier one, because all of Scripture testifies to the one reality. Breck also highlights the importance of *ascetic effort* in the life of the exegete who wishes to read her Bible within this spiritual perspective, or, as he would put it, this *theoria*.

Breck uses the concept of *θεωρία* to mean ‘an inspired vision of divine truth’. This *theoria* works on two levels. Firstly, it describes the inspired vision of the biblical author which determined the way in which he chose to express and record the narrative or writings. Secondly, it describes the inspired reading of the later interpreter in every generation, as they discern both the literal and the spiritual sense of the scripture. Breck points out that this view of inspiration harks back to the Antiochene Church Fathers whose understanding was that the biblical author intended to convey the literal meaning of the text, but that God spoke the spiritual sense through the written text in every generation. Prayer is the pathway that leads from the literal sense to the spiritual sense, or *sensus plenior*, and thus a life of holiness is essential for the one who really wishes to understand the text.⁴⁶

Breck sums up by saying that interpretation should have both a *doxological quality* and a *diaconal focus*.⁴⁷

It is immediately apparent that Breck’s principles are reflected in the metaphors found even in the very small selection of Chrysostom’s sermons studied in this paper. We have seen that Chrysostom invokes the principle of exegetical reciprocity to affirm that the different creation accounts in Genesis 1 and John 1 speak of the same reality within the one salvation economy. Breck’s notion of the theandric nature of the text is reflected in Chrysostom’s description of the text being the letters of God uttered or delivered through the tongue of Moses the messenger, and in the idea of the text mediating God’s presence. I have argued that the aim of Chrysostom’s

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 39-40.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 23, 36-7.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 44.

exegesis is to turn his congregation to worship, and so, like Breck, I see Chrysostom's exegesis as having both a doxological quality and a diaconal focus. This is only possible because, as priest and preacher, he is also disciple; his life has an ascetic quality which guards his exegesis, just as a similar holy lifestyle will guard the interpretation of his congregation. Before coming to hear him preach, Chrysostom would like his congregation to

purify our thinking and render our mind alert lest it be sodden with drink and find useless and unprofitable what should be of benefit in the exercise...fasting and neglect of appetite have inevitably proved the cause of innumerable benefits to us.⁴⁸

I have hinted throughout this paper that Chrysostom's metaphors for creation work at several levels. Obviously, the metaphors serve to describe creation itself. However, they also function to describe the creation *account*. God's loving kindness is revealed not only in his act of creation itself, but once his immediate presence was lost as a result of the Fall, in his willingness to mediate his presence through the words of Moses. God's considerateness is evident not just in his accommodating creation to our weaknesses but in providing us over the centuries with accounts of creation which in each case were appropriate for our state of spiritual and intellectual enlightenment. It is not only creation itself, but also the Genesis accounts which function as teacher, work of art and act of love. Thirdly, Chrysostom's preaching is faithful and true *because* he acts as teacher and example, because he lovingly crafts his sermons as works of art, because he acts in love for God and love for his congregation. Mitchell argued that it was Chrysostom's love for the apostle Paul which was the fundamental hermeneutical claim guaranteeing Chrysostom's exegesis: 'he understands the writings of the apostle so well because he loves him so much'. Chrysostom's love for Paul acted as a *φίλτρον* or love-charm, guiding his hermeneutic.⁴⁹ The metaphors for creation can function at all three levels, because the composition of the scriptural account as well as, to a lesser extent, the composition of Chrysostom's sermons, are creative acts, conducted by creatures acting in the image of their creator.

Is there yet another level at which these metaphors can operate? The level which remains is that of the reader interpreting the creation account today. If Breck is correct then at this level too there is a creative act involved as the theandric reality which is Scripture mediates the presence of God to the readers and demands a creative response from them as they

⁴⁸ *Hom. Gen. 1.4,6.*

⁴⁹ Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, p. 38.

encounter the Living Word of God within its pages. Surely the church fathers would agree that correct exegesis cannot be done solely in the academy, outside the community of faith and without love for the Author and the Word. It must be academically rigorous, but it must remain an act of love, and it must lead us to worship.

I would like to develop the work I have done on Chrysostom in several directions. First, I intend to extend my study of his *Homilies on Genesis* to the first sixteen homilies, as this covers both the creation accounts. Secondly, I would like to pay more attention to how he uses scriptural quotations – does he change the text when he quotes it, and what is he trying to illustrate? Next, I think that the metaphor of creation as ordering (εὐχολογίας) deserves further attention. The concept of the λόγος contained within it the concept of order from its link with reason or *ratio* and it would be interesting to explore the link between εὐχολογίας and λόγος, especially as Chrysostom emphasises that the order of creation springs from the powerful word of God as an act of love. Finally, I am particularly interested in Chrysostom's view of the scriptures as letters which, in Mitchell's words, mediate the complex dynamics of presence and absence. This is a concept which is also present in modern literary theory, eg the work of Jacques Derrida, and I would like to explore it further.

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Historiography of Baptists in Russia

Albert W Wardin Jr

The writing of Russian Baptist history for both Russians and non-Russians is a difficult task. Except for specialised subjects, one should have knowledge of Russian, English and German. Sources are in many languages and widely distributed in numerous countries, often unknown and even inaccessible. The history itself is very complex. It is like a Russian novel in its great length, complexity of plot, and various names for the same character. Free-church evangelicals or evangelical sectarians, as they are often called in Russian literature, have always faced a rugged road, sometimes victorious but often facing oppression or even extermination, with church and state fearing them as threats to the social order.

One major issue, often debated is, to what extent is the Russian Baptist movement indigenous? The Great Reforms of Alexander II, especially the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, and his support of the translation of the Bible into Russian and its distribution, helped to further the evangelical cause. The growth of pietism in Russia itself among Germans who settled in the country, Lutheran and Reformed, and the appearance of the Mennonite Brethren, a revivalist movement that split from other Mennonites in Russia and who adopted German Baptist polity, were also important conduits for the Russian sectarian movement.

In a sense Baptists were late comers but did appear at the right time and the right place, taking advantage of the ground already prepared. In fact, the first Russian evangelical sectarians knew nothing of Baptists. It took a number of years before believer's baptism by immersion, a cardinal tenet of the Baptist faith, became the general practice among Russian evangelical sectarians. The assertion of some Orthodox researchers that the Baptist movement was a direct implant by missionaries from Germany is false. Most Baptists from Germany were unable to stay for any length of time in the Empire and were exiled if they tried. Baptist influence from abroad was important, but it entered more by Russian evangelicals reaching out to Baptists rather than by foreign Baptist proselytism. In fact the German Baptist movement in Russia itself was also not a direct extension from Germany since its earliest leaders, such as Gottfried Alf in Russian Poland and Johann Pritzkau in Ukraine, both born in Russia, at first knew nothing of Baptists.¹

¹ See A.W. Wardin, 'How Indigenous was the Baptist Movement in the Russian Empire?', *Journal of European Baptist Studies (JEBS)*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Jan. 2009), pp. 29-37; A.W. Wardin, 'Penetration of the Baptists into the Russian Empire in the Nineteenth Century', *JEBS*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (May 2007), pp. 34-47;

The evangelical sectarian movement that became the Baptist movement did not issue from one source; it began almost simultaneously from a number of centres. Aside from German Baptists, Latvian Baptists, and Mennonite Brethren, all with their own separate origins, Russian and Ukrainian Baptists came from three widely separated areas. German pietists first influenced the Ukrainians who were led to a Baptist position by Johann Wieler, a Mennonite Brethren, and by the Pritzkau family, who had become German Baptists. A German-Lithuanian, Martin Kalweit, who was born in Russia, baptised in the Caucasus the first Russian, Nikita Voronin, a Molokan, through the good offices of Jakob Delyakov, a Nestorian evangelical. It developed quickly into an indigenous Baptist movement led by former Molokans. To further complicate the picture, an Anglican from England with Plymouth Brethren ties, Lord Radstock, started a movement among aristocrats in St Petersburg, which became known as Pashkovism. It too largely developed on its own. The Russian Baptist movement incorporated the Ukrainians, the Molokans who became Baptists, and eventually a number of the Pashkovites, while other Pashkovites became Evangelical Christians, close to Baptists in doctrine and polity. Latvian Baptists, also arising simultaneously, found support from East Prussia in Germany but became a self-sustaining movement, although becoming a part of the German Baptist Union in Russia.

To complete the complexity one must factor in evangelical influences from the West. They include the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Religious Tract Society, both with headquarters in London, the Oncken movement from Germany with its theological school in Hamburg, the Holiness movement from England, and mission support from Western Europe and the United States. In addition, the Evangelical Alliance and the Baptist World Alliance also exerted influence. The inter-relationships between Russian Baptists, German Baptists and Mennonite Brethren added an additional dimension.

A Search for Sources

As a young man and member of a Baptist family, I knew my grandfather, John Klemm, born in Ukraine, who went to America in 1893. Since I lived a thousand miles from him, I learned nothing of his life in Russia. Fifty years ago, when reading family obituaries, I was surprised to learn that I was the great-great-grand nephew of Gottfried Alf. He was a man of German descent but born in Russian Poland, knowing both German and Polish, who started the Baptist movement in Poland in 1858 and was the

and A.W. Wardin, 'Baptist Immersions in the Russian Empire: Difficult Beginnings', *JEBS*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (May 2010), pp. 37-44.

first ordained Baptist minister in the Russian Empire. I wanted to learn more about Baptists in Russia. I wrote to the Russian-Ukrainian Evangelical Baptist Union of the USA to ask about material in English or German but not Russian since I had not as yet studied it. This organisation suggested I contact Waldemar Gutsche, the former pastor of the German Baptist Church in Lodz who, in 1945 at the close of the Second World War, fled to the West. He had written two books: *Westliche Quellen des Russischen Stundismus* (1956) and *Religion und Evangelium in Sowjetrussland* (1959). He was acquainted with Russian Baptists and, in 1935, had taken a trip to visit Baptists during the Stalinist oppression. In 2009 his daughter, Christa Gutsche in Canada, published his autobiography, *Denn Er Tut Wunder*. Around 1970 I drove many miles to visit him in his home in Ohio. I was interested in collecting Russian Baptist material but thought it would be minimal since Russian Baptists had faced years of oppression and had lived through revolution and war.

In 1967 in Geneva, Switzerland, the Centre de Recherches et d'Etude des Institutions Religieuses held a symposium called, 'Prolegomena to the Historiography of the Russian Baptists'. A distinguished panel of eight scholars participated, which included the Latvian Baptist Adolph Klaupiks of the Baptist World Alliance; Andrew Blane, a Baptist who, in 1964, had finished a dissertation, 'The Relations between the Russian Protestant Sects and the State, 1900-1921'; Wilhelm Kahle, German Lutheran scholar who later wrote a standard history in German on the Evangelical Christians and its leader, Ivan S. Prokhanov; Michael Bordeaux, an English Anglican who was about to publish his landmark study, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, on the Reform Baptists or *Iniitsiativniki*; Dr and Mrs Stephen Dunn; and the director, William C. Fletcher. Their effort was only prefatory, and it is surprising how limited was their knowledge then of the availability of sources. They suggested the need to consult the work of the Marxist researcher, A. I. Klibanov, who had just published, in 1965, *Istoria Religioznogo sektantstva v Rossii*, which utilised materials in state archives not open to western scholars, as well as the Marxist Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich. They pointed to the reports of Konstantin Pobedonostsev, ober-procurator of the Holy Synod, and the need to search libraries in the West, the Helsinki Library, and archives of Baptists, Molokans and Baptists as well as emigrant groups. They also felt that anti-sectarian propagandists in both the Tsarist and Soviet periods might be helpful and even western observers, who they thought were not always reliable, as well as the Russian Baptist periodical, *Bratskii vestnik*.²

² William C. Fletcher, 'The Historiography of the Russian Baptists', *The Baptist Quarterly*, XXII/7 (July 1968), pp. 371-74.

In my own quest for materials, I decided to write to the Lenin Library in Moscow (now the Russian State Library), at that time only for a few pages, and I received a response. I then asked for more, and the more I asked the more I received. I began to get whole runs of evangelical publications, and it became so much that I appealed to the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives (SBHLA) in Nashville for help. It assisted in an exchange programme; the SBHLA in Nashville received material on microfilm that I requested, in exchange, volumes in English that the Lenin Library wanted. I also received material from the M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library in St Petersburg, as well as from a multitude of other sources in Europe and America. Without ever having planned for it, I decided in 1995 to publish my work, *Evangelical Sectarianism in the Russian Empire and the USSR: A Bibliographic Guide*, with 11,000 entries including explanatory introductions and annotations in seventeen languages, primarily, however, using Russian, German and English. It covered all evangelical sectarians with every possible category and relationship. I would never have dreamed it possible.

Although I gained a large amount of material from the Lenin Library, significant materials were found in a variety of locations. I give eight examples. One find was to locate in the library of the University of Birmingham, England, the papers of Vasily A. Pashkov, a voluminous body of correspondence with evangelicals. I asked Dr Lynn May, then director of the SBHLA, to visit this library to arrange for this material to be put on film, which was done with a consortium of three other libraries in the USA and Canada. As a result, researchers have used the collection, including Sharyl Corrado who wrote a dissertation, 'The Philosophy of Ministry of Colonel Vasilii Pashkov', published now in Russian, the dissertation of Johannes Dyck on the life of Johann Wieler, and the recent dissertation in 2010 by Gregory Nichols on Johann (Ivan) Kargel. At the Royal Library in Stockholm, Sweden, I discovered a partial set of Ivan Prokhanov's underground periodical, *Beseda*, which I acquired on microfilm. In going through issues of a non-denominational mission magazine, *The Harvest Field*, I discovered, in English translation, the autobiography of Jakob Delyakov, written originally in Farsi or Persian. Through the help of Johannes Dyck, a copy of the autobiography in the original Persian has now been acquired. In checking one of the appendices of the work by Viktor L. Val'kevich, *Zapiska o propagande protestantskikh" sekt" v" Rossii i, v" osobennosti, na Kavkaze*, published in Tiflis in 1900, I discovered two remarkable Russian letters. One was written by Karl Kalweit, the brother of Martin Kalweit, who described the time and place of his baptism as well as the baptism of Johann Kargel, never before recorded, and a letter of Nikita Voronin in which he told of his

baptism and relations with the Water Molokans, which somewhat counters Vasiliï V. Ivanov's views on the subject.

Some years ago I visited the Jarvis Street Baptist Church in Toronto, Canada, an independent Baptist congregation, to make arrangements to acquire the account of the meeting of William Fetler, then in exile, with Russian Baptists attending the Baptist World Alliance in 1928. I also went to the headquarters of the Echoes of Service, a Plymouth Brethren mission agency in Bath, England, to find in its periodicals, *The Missionary Echo* and *Echoes of Service*, correspondence of Lord Radstock and particularly the letters of Frederick Baedeker. In my own city of Nashville, I also went to the library of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society to acquire articles in periodicals of the Disciples of Christ that described the relationship of Prokhanov with that body and also his own negative views of Baptists at that time. In going through the issues of *Der Sendbote*, the journal published by the German Baptist Conference in the USA, I discovered valuable information on both German and Russian Baptists in Russia. One account was of an annual meeting, held secretly, of the Russian Baptist Union in the 1890s that had never before been listed. I am sure there are many other treasures to be found. Seek and ye shall find.

Collections

There are at least six significant types of collections for Russian Baptist history. The large number of collections shows both the diversity of sources and their widespread locations. The collections also clearly portray diverse ideologies in content and purpose and therefore must be used critically. Each collection makes a distinct contribution but must be tested for limitations of coverage and for bias.

The first type of collection is the Russian Baptist material from Baptists and other evangelicals in Russia itself. This includes the archives in Moscow of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists; periodicals of Baptists, Evangelical Christians, Mennonite Brethren, German Baptists, and Baltic Baptists; the records of conferences and other denominational meetings; and correspondence and memoirs. The Hilfskomitee Aquila of Steinhagen, Germany records, through its periodical, the history of Baptists and Mennonites in Siberia and Kazakstan. Sergeï Sannikov directed a project of the Euro-Asian Accrediting Association of a series of CDs on Baptist history. The work, *Istoriya Evangel'skikh Khristian-Baptistov v SSSR*, written by Sergeï N. Savinskii, Johannes Dyck, and P.D. Savchenko, and published in 1989 by the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists was a notable achievement as the first published comprehensive

history written in Russia by Baptists themselves. Much of this material may also be found in the archives of state libraries and museums in Russia, which has often been inaccessible to evangelical and western researchers, as well as Ukrainian state archives in Odessa and Kherson. As valuable as the materials of this collection are, they provide only part of the sources of Russian Baptist history.

A second collection is the material produced by the Orthodox Church and non-Baptist sectarians, such as Molokans, in the Tsarist period. Although, by and large, antagonistic towards evangelical sectarians, they provide another perspective, pointing out both strengths and weaknesses of the evangelicals and reasons for Orthodox and Molokan opposition. Such periodicals as the anti-sectarian *Missionerskoe obozrenie* and the Orthodox Church organ, *Tserkovnyi vestnik*, contain helpful materials. In addition, some Orthodox writers produced extremely valuable works even with an anti-sectarian point of view. Such is the work of Val'kevich, already mentioned, who produced, in 1900, an excellent narrative on primary sources, copies of the minutes of the Baptist church in Tiflis, congresses of the Russian Baptist Union, and a wealth of material from periodicals as well as over 350 letters. Another is the excellent work, *Yuzhnorusskii shtundizm*, by Arsenii Rozhdestvenskii in 1889. A third is the number of works on stundists and Russian and German Baptists by Aleksii Y. Dorodnitsyn, an anti-sectarian missionary in Ukraine who later became Bishop Aleksii. He published a large collection of documents from official state archives. A fourth are the writings of S.D. Bondar, a Russian official, who wrote dispassionately about Baptists in 1911 but, in 1916, was much more critical of the Mennonites because of Russian antagonism toward Germans during the First World War. The annual reports of Konstantin Pobedonostsev, ober-procurator of the Holy Synod, describe the activity of stundists and other evangelicals. The material in the diocesan press of the Orthodox Church included vast amounts of regional material.

A third collection includes the academic writings of secular writers with a Marxist orientation and material in anti-religious periodicals. Although such writing is freighted with social determinism and some of it is pure propaganda, yet such work may provide historical data from state archives not accessible to other researchers. As already noted, A.I. Klibanov produced, in 1965, *Istoriya religioznogo sektantstva v Rossii*, which, in 1982, was published in English, and is recognised for its scholarship both inside and outside Russia. The Marxist writer Z.V. Kalinicheva, in her work in 1972, *Sotsial'naya sushchnost' baptizma, 1917-1929*, however, faulted Klibanov's work, declaring that in describing sectarianism as a whole he neglected 'a whole series of questions tied to

the Baptist church'. In her comments on F.M. Putintsev, she credited him for good work in describing sectarian activity but criticised him in his description of the political views of Baptists for only superficially considering their dogma and morality.³ In his study of church-state relations, the western writer Blane, already mentioned, strongly criticised Putintsev for his Marxist bias in portraying evangelicals as anti-Bolshevik and reactionary in 1917. For instance, he demonstrated how Putintsev eliminated statements in Prokhanov's remarks at the Moscow State Congress in 1917, thus giving a false interpretation of his thinking.⁴ On the other hand, the Marxist Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich, praised alike by both Marxists and evangelicals for his integrity as a researcher, is in a category all his own. He tried to understand sectarians, gathered materials from them, and wrote of their persecution in his attempt to gain them for the Bolshevik cause. The journal, *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma*, in its thirty-eight volumes from 1966 to 1989, contains articles of academic value.

With the dissolution of the Marxist state in the Soviet Union, secular Russian scholars are emerging with a different historical framework, thus producing a sub-category to this collection. Andreï Savin has published work with documents on the evangelical churches in Siberia. In addition three women have produced notable dissertations: Nadezhda Belyakova on church-state relations after 1975, Oksana Besnosova on Baptist beginnings, and Olena Panych on Baptists and Pentecostals in Ukraine.

A fourth type of collection is the material in major state libraries and other libraries and archives in Russia and Ukraine. These depositories contain materials written by sectarians and their opponents but also legislation and decrees issued by both the Tsarist and Soviet regimes on church-state relations. Heather J. Coleman in her excellent work, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929*, published in 2005, listed a number of such archives. The list included, in Moscow, the Russian State Archive of Social-Political History, the State Archive of the Russian Federation, the Russian State Archive of Economics, the Division of Manuscripts of the Russian State Library, and the Russian State Archive of Kino-Foto Documents. In St Petersburg the author listed the Russian State Historical Archive, which includes materials of the Russian Orthodox Church, and the State Museum of the History of Religion that maintains collections on Baptists and materials collected by Bonch-Bruevich. Except for Coleman and Marxist scholars, western scholars or Russian evangelicals have, in the past, not used these types of materials.

³ Z.V. Kalinicheva, *Sotsial'naya sushchnost' baptizma, 1917-1929* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972), pp. 14-18.

⁴ Andrew Blane, 'The Relations between the Russian Protestant Sects and the State, 1900-1921', pp. 142-48, 152.

A fifth type of collection is the academic books and articles written in the West. Although such works are of high academic value, except for Kahle or Hans Christian Diedrich, who wrote *Ursprünge und Anfänge des russischen Freikirchentums* (1985), they generally fail to describe the pietistic, Mennonite, and German Baptist contributions to the evangelical sectarian movement. They generally limit themselves to one particular topic, such as the Reform Baptist or *Initsiativniki* movement, or concentrate on one particular period such as 1905 to 1929. Except for Coleman, they have not been able to utilise the state Russian archives. As already noted, as early as the sixties and seventies such scholars as Kahle, Bordeaux and Blane produced some notable works. In addition, Edmond Heir in 1970 published, *Religious Schism in the Russian Aristocracy, 1860-1900*, the first scholarly study of this movement in a western language. He used Russian, German and English sources and placed this movement in its social and economic context. Two outstanding dissertations of the time were the one by Samuel J. Nesdoly, 'Evangelical Sectarianism in Russia' (1971), who used both Orthodox and evangelical sources, stressing, in contrast to Marxist writers, the religious dynamism of the movement. The second by Paul D. Steeves, 'The Russian Baptist Union, 1917-1935: Evangelical Awakening in Russia', (1976) was, in spite of its title, a study of the Russian Baptist Union from 1884 until its demise in 1935, with heavy reliance on evangelical sources. In 1981 Walter Sawatsky, a Mennonite scholar, produced, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, the standard work on evangelicals after 1945. Except for my writing, little academic work was done after this work until recently with the work of Sharyl Corrado, Heather Coleman and Gregory Nichols.

Important archives for this collection are at the American Baptist Historical Society, the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Baylor University that now houses the significant collection of Reform Baptist materials of the Keston Archive and Library from England, the archives of the Baptist World Alliance, the Oncken Archive of the Union of Evangelical Free Church Congregations in Germany, the library of the International Baptist Theological Seminary, and Mennonite libraries in the USA and Canada. Important Baptist historical journals are the *American Baptist Quarterly*, *Baptist History and Heritage*, and *Mennonite Quarterly Review* in the USA, the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* in Canada, *The Baptist Quarterly* in England, and the *Journal of European Baptist Studies* and *Baptistic Theologies* in Europe.

A sixth and final type of collection is the material found among the publications of Baptist and other denominational and non-denominational mission agencies in America and Western Europe as well as publications

for the general public. Such material often provides a personal dimension lacking in other sources but must be used with care. Too often writers in missionary literature and the western press held up stundists, Baptists, and other evangelicals as paragons of Christian virtue and rectitude without blame or blemish. They never mentioned the internal rivalries and conflicts, slanderous attacks on their enemies, and their lack of sensitivity of political and social realities. They often portrayed Tsarist Russia, which considered itself a regime with Christian values, simply as a reactionary and oppressive regime. Although oppression at times was only too real, but in an effort to gain sympathy and support for evangelicals, they played up or exaggerated their sufferings and obstacles, often portraying their lot in the worst possible light.

The Task Ahead

Sergei N. Savinskii produced, in 1999 and 2001, two standard works on the history of Evangelical Christians and Baptists from 1867 to 1967, but much more needs to be done. In recent years I am pleased that individuals in Russia and Ukraine, such as A.P. Nagirnyak, Constantine Prokhorov, Timofei Cheprasov, Sergei Sannikov and Yuri Reshetnikov are now producing valuable historical work. Toivo Pilli from Estonia has done notable work for Estonian Baptists and Albertas Latužis and Lina Andronovienė from Lithuania for Lithuanian Baptists. Nevertheless more historical writing is needed in many more areas as well as research in Russian state archives. I list the following suggestions:

1. Biographies and biographical essays. I have written a biography of Gottfried Alf, published in both English and Polish, and articles on William Fetler, Jacob J. Wiens (Vins), and August Liebig. Far more, however, is needed for a full biography of Fetler, and for biographies of Vasiliï Pavlov, Vasiliï Ivanov and his son, Pavel Ivanov-Klyshnikov, Fedor P. Balikhin, Nikolai V. Odintsov, Johannes Pritzkau, Karl Ondra, Aleksandr V. Karev, as well as a work on the three generations of the Zhidkov family: Ivan, Yakov and Mikhail; a volume on the three generations of the Vins (Wiens) family: Jacob, Peter and Georgii with perhaps members of the fourth generation. A. P. Nagirnyak recently presented at the Scientific Theological Conference of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in 2007 a fine article on Deï I. Mazaev, but more is needed on him as well as his brother, Gavriil.

2. Volumes are needed on the contributions of evangelical sectarian women. A worthy study would be a biographical study of the aristocratic Pashkovite women of St Petersburg.
3. A book on worship practices and hymnody.
4. Additional research and writing and collection of documents are needed on both sides of the division between the Union of Evangelical-Christians Baptists and the Reform Baptist movement.
5. Research and writing on the inter-relationships of Russian Baptists, Baltic Baptists, German Baptists and Mennonite Brethren.
6. Research in the diocesan press of the Russian Orthodox Church for the development of regional histories.
7. Research and writing on the oppression of evangelical sectarians during the period of Pobedonostsev and the Communist era. Constanine Prokhorov has begun to make a contribution on the latter oppression with his article, 'Bozhie i Kesarevo', and his work of 400 pages, *Podvig Very*, a compilation of testimonies of Christians.
8. An investigation on sectarian attacks on the Orthodox Church and the latter's response.
9. Research and writing on the impact of Baptists in Russia from Baptist and other mission agencies as well as international organisations, such as the Evangelical Alliance and the Baptist World Alliance.
10. Research on the development of Pentecostalism in Russia and its relationship to Baptists. This includes an investigation into the life of Ivan E. Voronaev (born N.P. Cherkasov), who introduced Pentecostalism into Ukraine. Constantine Prokhorov recently made available the work of O. Bornovolokov, a Pentecostal, who wrote, *Factory, povliyavshie na razvitie pyatidesyatnicheskogo dvizheniya na yuge Ukrainy*, providing information on his life. With the help of an American Pentecostal of Bulgarian descent, Dony Donev, and the archives of the Assembly of God in the USA, I have assembled an extensive collection of material on the Voronaev movement. In addition, I also possess an archive on the Evangelical Christians in the Spirit of the Apostles (Jesus Only Pentecostals). Much more work, however, is needed on Pentecostalism in Russia.

No doubt other topics and themes might be suggested. The field is large, the task is daunting, but the opportunities are great.

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Book Reviews

Baptists Through the Centuries: A History of a Global People

David W Bebbington

Baylor University Press, Waco, Texas, 2010. 315 pages.

ISBN 978-1-60258-204-0

A Global Introduction to Baptist Churches

Robert E Johnson

Cambridge University Press, New York, 2010. 431 pages.

ISBN 978-0-521-70170-9

Are global Baptist overviews like big red London buses? You wait for ages, then two come along at the same time? David Bebbington has placed us all in his debt by producing his volume, based on material delivered at Baylor University, which seeks to track the story of the world community of Baptists from the early 1600s until today. Robert Johnson, on the staff at Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas, has equally sought to provide an overview within the same time frame and with a similar intention as Bebbington.

The authoritative work by Bebbington, after a long academic career, will take some matching in terms of accuracy, detail and scholarship, though his book is principally devoted to Baptists in the United Kingdom and United States, but each chapter regularly makes reference to developments within the wider Baptist family, especially in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. Whilst the book has early historical chapters on our Reformation roots, the Anabaptists, Particular and General Baptists and Baptists and Revival in the Eighteenth Century, later chapters are more thematic exploring key issues such as the Social Gospel, Racism, Women in Baptist life, Ministry and Sacraments, Religious Liberty and Foreign Mission. Johnson is not so commanding a figure on the Baptist stage and he takes an approach devoted to geographical comprehensiveness and following historical time frames with chapters on Baptists in each of the main regions of the world and in three time eras which he calls – Primal, Frontier, Proliferation.

Comparison of the two volumes demands some reflection on deep scholarship based on a lifetime of research, over against a younger scholar determined to be more global in coverage. As we have come to expect, David Bebbington explores contentious issues in a careful analytical way, weighing up the evidence with a forensic skill before making a judgement on a specific concern. Johnson is not so well known and in his overview he makes some judgements that this reviewer would question. For instance he takes no account of Anabaptist antecedents to the General and Particular

Baptists, whereas Bebbington wrestles with the on-going debate regarding their influence on the first English Baptist communities.

Readers seeking a one volume overview of Baptist history, theology and mission have a choice of contemporary authors to consult. Bebbington and Johnson undoubtedly provide works for a younger generation to be set in the context of earlier works of the same intention by Bill J. Leonard, William C. Brackney with H Leon McBeth and Robert G Torbert being pioneers of this genre for an even earlier period, all seeking to map out global Baptist history and development. This is a hard task within the compass of 300 - 400 pages. From such a global history readers might be encouraged to delve into volumes examining the story in a particular continent, amongst a particular group or in a specific country. However, as a starting point, David Bebbington, with his eye to detail and his measured judgements, might have provided the preferred option for the present.

This is not to dismiss Johnson, for he gives you the advantage of more information about the development of Baptist life in Asia and Africa than you will find in Bebbington. Yet there is a difference – measured scholarship and attention to the debates amongst us, over against a more globally comprehensive, but less forensic work.

In a perfect world both volumes should sit in your library to offer a balanced view. If you have to make a choice, and here I am addressing Europeans, despite its deficiencies in charting Baptist growth and development amongst the Slavs and Arabs, Bebbington has to be the preferred option. Overall, both are useful and important volumes, each highly valuable from their perspective, exploring the story of the people of God called Baptists. Both are a vital addition to any reading list on Baptist identity and ecclesiology being used in Baptist theological institutions in Europe and the Middle East.

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Baptists and the World: Renewing the Vision – Papers from the Baptist Historical Society Conference, Prague, Czech Republic, July 2008

John H Y Briggs and Anthony R Cross (editors)

Regent's Park College, Oxford, 2011. 228 pages. ISBN 978-1-907600-05-0

This collection of papers was delivered at the Baptist Historical Society Centenary Conference in 2008. The book is not narrowly thematic, but as befits a way of celebrating a notable milestone, the authors present material covering many different aspects of Baptist history and research. Leading

Baptist historians with strong pedigrees are represented – John Briggs, Bill Leonard, Brian Talbot, Karen Smith, Ian Randall, Dick Pierard and Toivo Pilli all offer mature reflection on topics close to their interests. Tony Peck, our EBF General Secretary, reflects on religious freedom in Central and Eastern Europe in a ‘long’ twentieth century.

There are contributions which are not Eurocentric. Brian Harris looks at Baptist Identity in the Southern Hemisphere, Loyd Allen and Bailey Nelson at the 2008 New Baptist Covenant in the USA (a useful reminder of an interesting development in Baptist life in North America given that a second assembly of diverse North American Baptist conventions, unions and fellowships has just been held in November 2011), and Jim Grenfell explores the foundation and expansion of Baptist work in Angola. These chapters seek to expand our vision of the world Baptist family in all its diversity.

True to another aspect of the work of the Baptist Historical Society, there are interesting chapters addressing aspects of being baptistic within a theological framework with an accent, not so much on history, but upon identity. Catriona Gorton explores what it might mean to use our Baptist story to assist in developing healthy (that is, destructive disagreement-free communities) congregations. Mark Hopkins explores the theology of ‘fellowship’ as understood within baptistic communities.

Then there is a category of papers around the notion of biography as history. I knew nothing about the role of British-born Baptist pastor Joseph Smale in the Azusa Street revival, but that will be helpful to me when countering some in eastern European settings who argue for a wide and deep trench between Baptists and Pentecostals. Linda Wilson takes us into other aspects of her on-going study of Marianne Farringham, and Matthew Tennant looks again at John Clifford exploring his theological understanding of socialism.

This collection of papers points to the breadth of interest the Baptist Historical Society has always fostered. No narrow concern simply for denominational history in the United Kingdom, but an engagement with Baptist identity, theology and *koinonia*. Though the collection will have different ‘highs’ and ‘lows’ for readers, we are reminded of what an important reflective and scholarly community the Baptist Historical Society has been for many of us. Our thanks are due to W.T. Whitley, H. Wheeler Robinson and others for founding this important organisation over 100 years ago, and to their successors who have carried forward the work.

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The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission: Towards an Evangelical Political Theology

David E. Fitch

Cascade Books (an imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers), Eugene, Oregon

2011, xxvi + 226 pages. ISBN: 978-1-60608-684-1

David Fitch is professor of evangelical theology at Northern Seminary in Lombard, Illinois, someone deeply committed to the best of the evangelical tradition. He is, therefore, in an excellent position to write this important critique of the problems facing especially North American evangelicalism today. He carries out this task through an engagement with the work of Slavoj Žižek, the Slovenian Marxist philosopher and social analyst. Žižek, a great iconoclast, with a surprising interest in Christianity, challenges beliefs which he regards as idolatrous. This makes him a particularly apt conversation partner for Fitch in this work.

Fitch's basic contention is that the way evangelicals are perceived in America is having a serious negative impact on their ability to witness to the gospel, that often they are responsible for this perception, and that what is needed is a new 'politic', a new way of living out the gospel in the world which will redress the negative perceptions. He argues that evangelicals have become to a large extent tarred with the same brush, regarded as part of the religious right that was so influential under George W. Bush's presidency. Within its own constituency this group may still have acceptance, but Fitch is clear that in society more generally, it has lost credibility, and often rightly.

From Žižek Fitch takes the idea of an 'empty politic', of a void, something pretending to be something but actually being nothing. It is only by placing all of one's hopes in a sort of logical hole between what is claimed and what is lived that the paradox can be maintained. But because the centre is a void, it will always ultimately collapse. Fitch also points in this respect to Žižek's term, the Master Signifier, ideas which are not real but which hold together an ideology (think, perhaps, Big Brother in George Orwell's *1984*). The emptiness of these Master Signifiers is revealed whenever the Real irrupts and shows their emptiness.

Fitch investigates three major areas of Evangelical belief in the light of his presentation of Žižek's theory: the inerrancy of the Bible, the centrality of the decision for Christ, and the notion of the Christian nation. Fitch does not claim to be exhaustive, but within his context the choice is certainly reasonable.

Methodologically the chapters are similar. Fitch's argument in the first, as an example, is not to do with whether and in what sense the Bible is inerrant. In the terms of his analysis, those kinds of questions are irrelevant,

since he is looking at how the idea of biblical inerrancy has become so central to evangelicalism. It has become a Master Signifier. He points to the fact that many doctrinal statements specify that the bible is 'inerrant according to the original autographs'. But as we will never have these documents, we place our trust in something that can never be known. There is then literally an emptiness at the heart of the belief in the inerrant bible. Incapable of proof or disproof, it serves as a rallying point against all criticisms. This leads, he says, to evangelicals believing that they 'have the truth while at the same time remaining distant from actually engaging in it as a way of life' (p.57). Ultimately this sense of possessing the truth leads, says Fitch, to an arrogance at the heart of evangelicalism. Fitch also shows what happens when the real erupts and people take the ideas contained in the Master Signifier too seriously. The third aspect of the chapters is to show how the ideas are used to deal with those who are perceived as the 'enemy' by treating them as deniers of the Master Signifier.

The final chapter seeks to present a positive politic for Evangelical life in North America today. He does this by seeking to recover the core practice at the heart of the three areas he discusses, the practice of the Scripture, of salvation and of the church in society, and in dialogue with an impressive and ecumenical list of theologians.

Some minor criticisms of the book could be made. He rather over-stresses the difficulty of Žižek, and the style is not always that reader-friendly. The final chapter seems to have the basic intuitions correct without always being able to state them quite as clearly as might be desirable. But it is generally easier to point to the ills than to construct a positive picture, especially since, as indeed Fitch is well aware, what is called for is a revival of communal practice, and definitely not an individualistic approach.

However, overall this is an excellent book. It shows what happens when we allow a thinker from another world to challenge us, and we start to regard our world through her or his eyes. Even more importantly, though, this is a caring, concerned and deeply honest appraisal of the state of evangelicalism in North America today. It will have its own sharp critics from inside that world – the very analysis undertaken points to the inevitability of that. But I think it is accurate and powerful, and a book I am already recommending to my students, in North America and elsewhere, in order to help them to reflect on their own positions. We can be truly grateful to David Fitch for having had the courage and the intellectual and pastoral honesty to write this book.

Tim Noble

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